EAST ROCK PARK

New Haven

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EAST ROCK PARK

NEW HAVEN

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1898
CITY OF WASHINGTON.

EAST ROCK PARK.

ABOUT one mile and a half northeast from City Hall rises East Rock, the terminus of a spur (as West Rock is of another) of the Green Mountain range. The southwest face is a precipitous cliff one-half a mile in length and rising four hundred feet above the level of the sea. This cliff gives the park its name; but there are included within the park boundaries, Whitney Peak, which is north of East Rock and 325 feet high; Indian Head, 340 feet high; and Snake Rock, 230 feet high; both to the southeast. The whole park covers an area two miles long and over a half mile wide.

In the winter of 1823 the dead body of Elias Turner was found on the summit of the Rock, in a rude hut he had himself built, and which had afforded him shelter through many previous winter storms. Tradition says he had been crossed in love, and becoming a misanthropic, secluded himself from his kind, led a wild and precarious life on the Rock, and was scarcely ever known to speak to a human creature.

He was succeeded as monarch of the Rock by a squatter named Hubbell, who is still remembered by many old residents of New Haven as an eccentric character, making a meagre living by the sale of wood, which he hauled from the Rock and through the streets of the city by a goat team.

Next we learn of a Mr. Smith and his wife, who lived in a small house, on the site afterwards occupied by the old Stewart House. They were well and favorably known to all visitors to the Rock, to whom they sold refreshments. In 1848 their mutilated corpses were found outside their dwelling, while within was a scene of destruction, the floor having been torn up, evidently in a search for hidden treasure. The murderer was discovered, and in 1850 expiated his crime on the scaffold.

Not long afterward Milton J. Stewart come into possession by purchase and built the old Stewart House, with its outbuildings. He also commenced the building of a tower on the edge of the cliff, as an observatory. This has been converted by the Park Commissioners into the present refreshment pavillion.

Some years since it was first suggested that East Rock should form the nucleus of a City Park; but it was not until 1879 that about $8,000 were subscribed and several pieces of land donated. In 1880 a charter was granted and six commissioners appointed. These gentlemen, after considerable negotiation, purchased from Mr. Stewart the whole of his East Rock property (which comprises the greater portion of the Park as at present laid out) for the sum of about $17,000. Since then, by purchase and donation, the Park boundaries have been somewhat extended.

In 1882 the Commissioners consulted Donald G. Mitchell, Esq., (better known as "Ike Marvel"), with the object of securing such a layout of the Park as would conserve its natural features and beauties, and at the same time make them more accessible and more enjoyable—art, wherever necessary, to be used as an aid to nature; but nature to be ever the teacher of art. How well this principle has been carried

ers, those who knew East Rock as it was and who know it as it now is, will relish with enthusiastic appreciation.

During Mr. Stewart's occupancy the only access to the top of the Rock was the old Stewart Road, very rough and precipitous, which ran from the foot of the Rock through the pasture between East Rock and Indian Head.

The first work of the Commissioners was the construction of Indian Head Drive, from Bishop Glen on Cedar Street to the summit at Indian Head.

The first portion of the improvements in the Pleasant Drive, which commences at the head of Orange Street, passes along the west side of the Rock, winds around Whitney Park, and reaches the top of the Rock near the Ramapaugo House, overlooking much surrounding country, the Mountains, and stretching away north, forms an object, whose entire area is about one-quarter of a mile in length and the mean about 400 feet.

English Drive commences at Orange Street Bridge, follows the course of the old road at the foot of the cliff, to the second of the Rock at or near the end of the old Stewart Road, winds around Indian Head, and continues at the top of the Rock, as the monument. This Drive may be reached from Cedar Street by following Indian Head Drive to the Indian spring, the same, and thence proceeding along the road to the junction of the Drive, where the two roads connect.

The Park may be approached from Whitney Avenue by crossing the bridge at Lake Whitney, and passing the course of the road to its junction with Pleasant Drive. But by whatever route the visitor approached, the view that then opens to the eye is one of unusual beauty.

Below lie the Mill River, winding like a silvery ribbon through the valley on its way to the Harbor, beyond, the city—with its beautiful suburb of East Haven in the rear—is spread out before us like a map. To the northward lies the Harbor, with its steamers and sloops, and above the East Haven Shore are Quinnipiac, Annadale, East Hill, Morris Cove, and the Old Lighthouse. On the opposite shore of the Harbor appears Oyster Point, the Lovers' Leaps Rocks, where the British in 1779 landed to attack New Haven, and beyond, the southern portion of Savin Rock. At the entrance to the Harbor, the Rock's Light and Lighthouse are clearly defined. To close the view we have the blue waters of the Sound, bounded by the purple hills of Long Island, among the white sails. On the south side the hill slopes abruptly down to the meadows of the Quinnipiac River, where the devil and other railroad bridges intersect the scene, that would otherwise be spoiled by its sidewalk.

On June 17, 1887, the monument and Indian Memorial were dedicated. The four bronze statues at the foot of the shaft represent History, Victory, Patriotism, and Friendship. Placed between them, on the granite pedestal, are the four panel scenes in which the United States have been engaged, and which we have the names of the principal battles of each of those wars. The shaft, from the base to the top, is the name of the Angel of Peace in the east side, and from the top, which is reached over a flight of winding stairway, a beautiful and extensive view of the surrounding country and sea are obtained.

The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument.

Bronze Statues History, Victory and Prosperity.

Base of Monument

VIEW OF NEW HAVEN AND THE HARBOR, FROM EAST ROCK.

View South from Rock Path.

MILL RIVER AND LAKE WHITNEY, FROM FARNAM DRIVE.

East Rock and Horseshoe.

FARNAM DRIVE.

A Glimpse of the Monument, from English Drive.

HEMLOCK GROVE FROM FARNAM DRIVE.

ENGLISH BRIDGE.

ROCK STEPS, FROM ENGLISH DRIVE.

FOOTPATH TO TOP OF EAST ROCK, FROM ENGLISH DRIVE.

VIEW FROM ORANGE STREET BRIDGE.

PAVILION AND RESTAURANT.

INDIAN HEAD AND QUINNIPIAC, FROM ABOVE THE STONE STEPS

ROCK LANE BRIDGE. WHITNEY AVENUE FOOTPATH BRIDGE.

MILL RIVER, FROM ROCK PATH.

VIEW FROM FOOT OF INDIAN HEAD.

East Rock and New Haven from South View Ridge.

East Rock and Rock Lane Bridge, from Footpath Bridge.

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